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Chronology of the County Administration Center

- 1902** Initial interest expressed in the construction of a Civic Center.
- 1907** Civic Improvement Committee established. Later changed name to Civic Center Committee. As a result of George Marston's work on this committee, John Nolen was brought to San Diego to work on first plan.
- 1908** First Nolen Plan completed; recommended the construction of a Civic Center in the heart of downtown.
- 1909** *January 1:* Nolen report submitted to the public.
- 1911** Statute issued granting the tidelands property to the City of San Diego on the condition that it be used for navigation, commerce and fishing and that it make \$1 million in harbor improvements.
- 1913** Renewed interest in the Nolen Plan; a Civic Center plan based on the Nolen Plan, but modified to lessen the cost of land, was put before the City Council, but did not generate enough interest to be implemented.
- 1914** As part of the improvements under the Statutes of 1911, the bulkhead was established and the harbor dredged. The dredging materials were used to fill in the submerged tidelands from which the CAC site emerged this year.
- 1915** Pan Pacific Exposition in Balboa Park. Designs for exposition buildings in Balboa Park spawned the popularity of ornate Spanish Revival architecture in the San Diego area.
- 1924** *January:* Board passed resolution #39993, which officially invited the San Diego City Council to confer with Supervisors to discuss the possibility of constructing a combined City/County building.
- 1926** Second Nolen Plan submitted to the City Planning Commission; recommended the waterfront site for the Civic Center.
March 8: Civic Center site officially listed for the first time; city plan adopted.
December: Board of Supervisors passed resolution declaring "the necessity for the erection of a public building" for both the City and the County.
- 1927** *March 22:* San Diego voters approved the waterfront location through a countywide election.
- 1929** Objections raised about the waterfront site led to a bill introduced in the state legislature that set aside the land for Civic Center purposes.
June 11: Governor approved and signed the bill that conveyed the CAC property to the County and the City of San Diego as joint owners upon payment of \$1,000 (Chapter 778 of Statutes of 1929).
- 1930** *November 4:* A special election was held to vote \$500,000 in bonds to pay half the cost of the Civic Center building. The necessary two-thirds majority was not obtained, and the issue did not pass.
- 1931** *October:* A resolution of the Common Council of the City stated that other locations would be considered as possible sites for the Civic Center.
December: In a countywide election, voters favored the plan to build the center on the tidelands site.
- 1932** *January:* The Civic Center Committee suggested that the building be constructed on the unoccupied portion of the courthouse block. The committee pointed out that financial circumstances would make it difficult to sell bonds backed by the best of security; the Depression prevented economic certainty.
- 1933** A bond issue that had been organized by the Citizen's Civic Center Committee was defeated.
Payment was finally made for the tidelands site by the city and county (\$1,000) to secure ownership under Chapter 778 of the Statutes of 1929.
Passage of the National Industrial Relief Act revived hope for possible construction of a Civic Center.
June: The City Attorney informed the city and the county that there weren't enough funds available to erect the building, then advised that an application be made to the Federal Public Works fund.

- August:* A Civic Center Report submitted by joint committee composed of the City and County Planning Commissions advised that the waterfront site be chosen for the location of the Civic Center.
- October:* Board of Supervisors resolved that the courthouse site was inadequate for a Civic Center.
- December 19:* Citizens voted to construct the Civic Center on the tidelands site rather than the courthouse or Balboa Park sites; the tidelands site won by a narrow margin.
- 1934** *January 11:* Ordinance authorizing payment of the County's \$500 to secure the site voted by Supervisors. The City's ordinance was passed four days later.
- February 10:* State Supreme Court case of *Atwood v Hammond* commenced and was dismissed on March 19th; the waterfront site was declared free from the tidelands trust of 1911.
- May:* Civic Center Committee was established, comprised of councilmen and supervisors.
- Summer:* City and County appropriated funds to be used to pay for architectural plans for the Civic Center.
- 1935** Early this year, architects Johnson, Requa and Gill appeared before the Board of Supervisors with a model of the proposed Civic Center.
- January:* The administrator of the Federal Emergency Public Works informed the City and County that federal funds were depleted, but still encouraged San Diego to apply for assistance in the event that more funding would be appropriated.
- March 25:* Waterfront site decision secured through resolution adopted by Board of Supervisors.
- April 9:* County resolved to construct the Civic Center at a total cost of no more than \$1 million.
- April 23:* One million dollar bond issue presented to voters; a two-thirds majority was not obtained. It was decided that the only remaining option would be to apply to the federal government for aid.
- August 28:* Request made for \$1 million Public Works Administration project to start construction; City and County filed application for PWA project.
- September:* President Roosevelt authorized \$1 million to be granted from the Works Progress Administration one week after a personal tour of the site.
- November 12:* City Manager signs architects' contract.
- November 19:* Architects' contract signed by every member of the Board of Supervisors. Contract gave architects \$36,000 for planning and \$14,000 for supervision; cost was shared by both the City and the County.
- End of November:* Works Progress Administrator Frank McLaughlin sent a telegram authorizing the commencement of construction.
- December:* McLaughlin announced that the Civic Center project had been approved, and the federal contribution of \$989,528 was in a bank in San Francisco.
- December 5:* Groundbreaking ceremony took place at site, with the first earth turned by George W. Marston.
- 1936** *January 4:* Actual construction began.
- October 8:* Bidding for private contractors opened; jurisdiction of the WPA had ended with completion of the building's foundation.
- October 28:* Contract for completion of remaining four stories awarded to B.O. Larsen Construction. Soon after, the remainder of the WPA money was conveyed to the City and County of San Diego.
- 1937** *June 28:* Board of Supervisors approved specifications of Donal Hord's "Guardian of Water" fountain.
- June 29:* City Council followed county in approving specifications.
- July:* A 22-ton granite block delivered to Donal Hord's studio to begin construction of the fountain.
- October 29:* Luncheon held to celebrate completion of the building's exterior.
- 1938** *May 24:* Contract for completing building awarded to Charles L. Hoskins.
- July 6:* Telegram sent to Ralph Jenney requesting that he act as chairman of a welcoming committee for the president; Jenney formally accepted the following day.
- July 16:* President Roosevelt arrived in San Diego in order to dedicate the Civic Center; about 25,000 people attended the ceremony.
- November:* County and City agree to sponsor a WPA Federal Art Project that will finance the painting of three mural panels each for the Board Chamber and the City Council Chamber.
- December 19:* City Hall offices were moved to Civic Center building.
- December 23:* Civic Center opening ceremonies; building officially opens for business.

- December 27:* First official meeting held in Civic Center.
- Roland Hoyt hired as landscape architect for \$100,000 WPA project to redesign the grounds (at a total cost of \$129,944).
- 1939** *February:* WPA weaving project arranged to produce a series of three historical tapestries for the interior of the Civic Center.
- May:* Designs for mural panels approved.
- June 10:* Dedication ceremony held for Hord's "Guardian of Water" sculpture.
- Landscaping of grounds completed by Hoyt.
- 1945** Statutes of 1929 amended to provide that the land was conveyed to the City and County as co-owners rather than joint owners, and the co-owners could convey interest in property to each other. This provided part of the foundation for the transfer of the City's land to the County.
- 1956** Building construction: third floor area extended over west branch of north wing, adding to the chambers of the Board of Supervisors.
- 1958** Health Center constructed on northwest side of building.
- 1960** Replica of "Guardian of Water" sculpture completed; the San Diego-Yokohama Friendship Commission accepted it and shipped it to Yokohama.
- Third floor expansion undertaken to move the mayor's office there from the eighth floor.
- 1962** Two appraisal reports commissioned in preparation for the sale of the City's share of the building to the County. Appraisals were in the vicinity of \$7 million.
- 1963** *July 17:* County acquired City's remaining interest in Civic Center; cost set at \$3.3 million.
- 1964** *October:* The County paid its first installment of the \$3.3 million to the City.
- November 13:* City began moving out. Move completed in January of 1965.
- 1967** The County finished paying the \$3.3 million bill to the City.
- 1969** Third floor northeast wing added at cost of \$500,000 to house the Clerk of the Board.
- Nighttime lighting system set up on the western side of the building.
- 1974** An extensive improvement project was undertaken to modernize the CAC. Additions built on top of the third floor at north end and another on top of the second floor of southeast wing. Cafeteria constructed on south end of fourth floor. Would add 21,000 square feet at a cost of \$10.1 million.
- 1984** Low-use water demonstration garden installed on the eastern side of the complex.
- 1986** *October 22:* City Historic Site Board approved CAC as a historic site.
- 1987** Board of Supervisors revived idea of Cedar Street Mall (complex of government buildings from the bay to Balboa Park), a take-off on the Nolen Plan.
- 1988** *May 16:* National Register of Historic Places recognized the CAC as a national historic site.
- July 11:* Ceremony for historic designation; in addition, celebration of the 50th anniversary of the building's original dedication.
- 1989** *December:* Relighting of Center (at night) as a result of campaign by Citizens Coordinate for Century 3.
- 1996** *January 30:* Board of Supervisors appoints the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to serve as administrator of the County Administration Center.
- February 27:* After a 5-year-long dry spell caused by mechanical problems, the "Guardian of Water" sculpture fountain was turned on again.
- 1997** The Board of Supervisors takes leadership in the development of the North Embarcadero planning process through membership in the North Embarcadero Alliance, an interagency collaboration between the County, City of San Diego, Centre City Development Corporation, Port and the Navy.
- 1998** *February 10:* Board of Supervisors appropriates \$3 million for the restoration of the tower, repair of the red tile roof and repair and painting of the exterior.
- July 16:* Sixtieth Anniversary celebration held on the west side of the building with bands, vintage cars and festivities.

Resource Catalog

Sources and Locations

1. **Board of Supervisors Records:** Located in the Clerk of the Board office on the fourth floor of the County Administration Center.

2. **Department of Media and Public Relations:** Located on the second floor of the County Administration Center.

3. **Central Library:** Located at 7th and E Streets in downtown San Diego. The majority of relevant information is maintained in the California Room.

4. **Archives of the San Diego Historical Society:** Located on the bottom floor of the Casa de Balboa in Balboa Park.

Available Information

I. Resources Within the County Administration Center

A. **Board of Supervisors Records:** The file used is titled County Administrative Center: Acquisition of Site. The bulk of the file consists of letters between county departments, city departments, planning committees, state and federal offices, local architects, and residents of San Diego. Also included is a volume titled A Civic Center Report (1933), which contains useful information about the location of the site. In addition, a bound volume from the State Supreme Court Case of *Atwood v Hammond* is useful when discussing the entitlement difficulties of building on the waterfront site. The majority of information in this file is pre-construction, and most of it is in the form of official documents or letters between officials (both city and county). It is especially useful if there is a need to show primary documents (such as resolutions and ordinances, which are either included or referred to) or to indicate how various citizens expressed their support or disapproval of the plans for the Civic Center. The most recent documents are statements of expenses from President Roosevelt's dedication ceremony in the summer of 1935.

Other files from Records pertaining to the County Administration Center:

1. *Administration Building-Civic Center.* Bronze Plaque-Fountain Statue and Murals. Resolutions and written correspondence regarding the bronze plaque placed near the entrance to the CAC; approval of the "Guardian of Water" specifications and correspondence

regarding the ethnicity of the model for the statue; resolutions dealing with the appointment of artists to complete the WPA mural project.

2. *P.W.A General Services: County Admin. Center (Misc.) 7/24/62.* Contains two appraisals of the CAC; one conducted by John Cotton and the other by Ewart Goodwin and Thomas Sandmeyer. These appraisals were commissioned in order to assess the monetary value of the Civic Center so that the City could transfer its share of the building to the County.

3. *Co. Admin. Center:* Miscellaneous File No. 2. 5/31/61 to 7/3/73. Correspondence regarding dwindling space at the CAC. Contains consideration of improvement proposal [what would become the extensive 1974 renovation project]. Contains copies of the quitclaim deed by which the county acquired the city's share of the Civic Center.

4. *General Services: Co. Admin. Center Construction Misc.* 10/4/55 to 12/21/64. Mostly records of alterations to the building. Includes some information about constructing additional space.

B. **Media and Public Relations:** This office is an excellent resource both for researching the history of the building and in locating pictures of the site. There is also a copy of the 1926 Nolen Plan available (see library section for description of Nolen Plan).

1. The green file folder titled Civic Center: Administration Building/County Administration Center contains mainly newspaper clippings, in addition to one document by Cynthia Malinick which summarizes part of the history of the building. Portions of this document have been used in this document.

2. Two manila folders contain original photographs (and negatives) from construction and dedication of the building. The first folder, titled *CAC Construction, etc. 1934-36: Historical Copies/Historical County Buildings* contains numerous copies of three

important photographs: 1) FDR at the microphone during the dedication ceremony (seated in car, close range); 2) Civic Center from a distance, showing the crowd of thousands gathered for the ceremony; and 3) FDR in car during the dedication ceremony (taken from the crowd's perspective). The second folder, titled *CAC Construction 1936-*, contains a series of photos that are useful in showing the progress of the building construction.

3. A large photograph of the original 1938 painting of the Civic Center by Charles Reiffel.

II. Resources in the Central Public Library

A. *Nolen Plans*: Located in the California Room on the second floor. They cannot be removed from the room. Call number RCC 352.7.

1. *San Diego: A Comprehensive Plan for its Improvement*, 1908. Nolen was brought out to San Diego from the East Coast and commissioned by George Marston to publish this plan. Includes sketches of the proposed Civic Center in a different site than the waterfront location. This was the earliest documentation of Civic Center planning; it helped contribute to the awareness of the growing need for a civic center.

2. *A Comprehensive City Plan for San Diego, California*, 1926. Includes an extensive map of Nolen's ideas for the city, including reference to the waterfront site as its proposed location. This document was commissioned by the City, and a result of Nolen's recommendations in this plan, the waterfront site became the site selected by the City and County governments.

B. Unbound Periodicals: Also located in the California Room; periodicals are in file drawers in the back of the room and can be accessed without the librarian. The files titled

Civic Center - San Diego (City) and *County Administration Center - San Diego (County)* contain newspaper clippings dating from pre-construction to recent events concerning the CAC; in particular, there is a lot of information about the City's relocation in 1963 and the proposed development of the CAC parking lots during the early 1980's. Also included is information about the historic designation of the site and the celebration of its 50th birthday in 1988. There is an original invitation to the historic designation ceremony, and many of the newspaper clippings feature photographs of the CAC.

C. *Rising Tide: The History of San Diego: Richard Pourade*, 1967. Published by the Union-Tribune Publishing Company. Located in the California Room, call number RCC 979.498/Pourade. Contains information about the historical aspects of San Diego, with a small amount of attention devoted to the Civic Center. One picture shows the dedication ceremony, and there is also a collection of three sketches of the proposed Center, indicating the architectural changes that it underwent during the design phase. Excellent background information and attention devoted to key civic leaders such as Marston.

III. Resources in the Archives of the San Diego Historical Society

A. *Journal of San Diego History: "The Silent Sentinel: Samuel Wood Hamill, F.A.I.A."* by Laura Young. Issue from Winter, 1985. Contains information about Sam Hamill's participation in the Civic Center project, as well as extensive biographical information.

B. Master's Thesis by Pamela Hart Branton: *The Works Progress Administration in San Diego County, 1935-1943*. Half of a chapter in this thesis (pp. 80-87) is devoted to the construction of the Civic Center in the context of a WPA project. It is basically a summary of the process of obtaining aid. Some of this information is included in this document.

C. George White Marston Papers: Contain a significant amount of information about Marston's role in building the Civic Center. Located in Box 1 File 8.

D. Blueprints, presentation drawings: The archives store a large quantity of architectural drawings of the building. Below is a list of visuals, located by archive call numbers.

#AD 1050-004 F6-D6: Drawing of proposed Civic Center: watercolor on heavy board (30"x 40"). No date.

#AD 1050-002 F3-D1: Three partial sheets of details of the tile pattern design on various exterior parts of the building. Authors: Gill, Johnson, Requa & Hamill.

#AD 1050-003 F6-D6: Eight sheets of blueprints (30" x 47") in excellent condition from 1934. Authors: Requa, Jackson & Hamill; William T. Johnson; Louis J. Gill.

#AD 1001-000 Photo Collection: "Films of Richard S. Requa, AIA, 1920s through 1937." A collection of Requa's personal films (18 reels) that contains some footage of the early foundation construction of the building (on reel 31).

#AD P 1050-006 F6-D12: Presentation drawing of Civic Center. Pen and ink on paper; original drawing of east elevation.

#AD P 1050-007 F6-D12: Presentation drawing showing west elevation.

#AD 1050-009 F3-D4: Bound, mimeographed volume containing the complete set of standard contractor's specifications from February of 1936. Gill, Johnson, Requa and Hamill.

#AD 1050-014 F6-Ds2: These are the floor plans (blueprints) with specific city and county office and department space allocations penciled in. January 1936. Gill, Johnson, Requa and Hamill.

#AD 1050-000: File of 44 construction photos from the series of 70 photos taken by Requa.

#AD 1050-008: This is a professionally-produced documentary of the design, construction and dedication of Donal Hord's statue, Guardian of Water. It shows his sketches, live models, quarrying the stone, roughing out the figure, finishing, moving into place, design of the tile fountain, details of the tile installation and dedication on June 10, 1939. It is a VHS videocassette titled "A Symphony in Stone," 15 minutes long.